

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
CHAIRMAN

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY
BRUCE L. BRALEY, IOWA
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BETTY McCOLLUM, MINNESOTA
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
PAUL W. HODES, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
JOHN P. SARBANES, MARYLAND
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
FACSIMILE (202) 225-4764
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
TTY (202) 225-6852

<http://oversight.house.gov>

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

DAN BURTON, INDIANA
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
MICHAEL B. TURNER, OHIO
DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA
BRIAN P. BILBRAY, CALIFORNIA
BILL SALI, IDAHO

May 24, 2007

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter renews my May 2, 2007 request that you hold a hearing on the preparedness of the District of Columbia's fire hydrant system. The April fire at the D.C. Public Library in Georgetown revealed faulty and broken hydrants in the library's vicinity. Firefighters were forced to use hydrants located two blocks from the fire, increasing response time, causing more property damage, and risking more lives.¹

Today, the *Washington Post* reveals that the D.C. Fire Department, the firefighters' union, and the Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) cannot even agree on the extent of the city's hydrant problem. In fact, the problem seems to be worse than originally assessed. D.C. Fire Chief Dennis L. Rubin estimates that at least 10% of D.C. hydrants are broken and another 15% are in need of immediate repair. According to Chief Rubin, 15% of the hydrants in the Capitol Hill area do not function and 18% are in need of immediate repair. If faced with a large-scale terrorist attack on the Capitol, the first responders may face a malfunction at one out of every three hydrants.²

Nonworking fire hydrants make the city more vulnerable to a terrorist attack that could result in uncontained fires. Since September 11, 2001 the District of Columbia, as the Nation's capital and the heart of the federal government has been widely acknowledged as a likely target of additional terrorist attacks. It is Congress' responsibility to ensure that the District, as the seat of the federal government, is protected and can effectively manage the consequences of such an attack.

¹ "Across D.C., Dozens of Hydrants Are Broken," *The Washington Post*, May 2, 2007, A01.

² "More D.C. Hydrants May Be Broken" *The Washington Post*, May 24, 2007. A01

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
May 24, 2007
Page 2

To fulfill this responsibility, the Committee needs to know how many hydrants do not work; how often are they inspected; whether inspections are properly reported; how quickly repairs are made once an inspection reveals a problem; and how quickly repairs are made to a hydrant that is reported as broken outside of regular inspections. Answers to these questions will allow us to determine whether federal intervention and assistance are necessary.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to working with you on this crucial issue of emergency preparedness. We cannot afford to suffer the results of a failure of initiative.

Sincerely



Tom Davis
Ranking Member

Cc: The Honorable Danny K. Davis
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District
of Columbia